DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 969 UD 020 911

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TITLE Project P.R.O.B.E. Final Evaluation Report.
INSTITUTION Community School District 7, Bronx, N.Y.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 27p.: Tables may be marginally legible due to broken print.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education: *Cognitive Development: Early Childhood Education: Program Descriptions: *Program Effectiveness: Program Evaluation: *Reading Skills: Spanish Speaking
IDENTIFIERS *Bilingual Education Act 1968: Elementary Secondary Education Act Title VII: *New York (Bronx)

ABSTRACT

This evaluation report describes Project P.R.O.B.E., a bilingual education program for four and five year old Spanish speaking children in two Bronx, New York schools. The educational objectives of the program, including the improvement of reading and other curriculum skills, are outlined. Also described are staffing patterns, orientation and training: efforts to achieve parental participation in their children's education: and instructional facilities, materials, and activities. The achievement of the program's objectives is evaluated in terms of student cognitive development and performance on the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts and the James Language Dominance Test, parent involvement and knowledge of parenting skills, and staff mastery of relevant teaching skills. It is concluded that Project P.R.O.B.E. has been successful in achieving its objectives. Reading growth and cognitive development were found to occur through bilingual instruction and a stimulating learning environment. Recommendations are offered for improving the program in the areas of instruction, staff utilization, scheduling, parent workshops, and contact between staff members in the two schools. (GC)

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PROJECT P.R.O.B.E.

(Title VII Funding)

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

1. Community School District #7, Bronx, New York
2. September 1, 1978 - June 30, 1979
3. Project Number: 5045-97603
4. Grant Number: G 007700392

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ED 209 118

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I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

This program was to provide a stimulating bilingual classroom environment conducted in Spanish for four (4) and five (5) year olds in P.S. 5, Bronx and the Early Childhood Center, #2 Bronx.

Fifteen (15) A.M. and fifteen (15) P.M. four (4) year olds, twenty-five (25) A.M. and twenty-five (25) P.M. five (5) year olds and their parents at each location were to be involved in the process of improving the rate of reading growth and cognitive development in the child's experience.

A strong emphasis on oral language, motor sensory co-ordination and training in reasoning was to be fostered. In addition, cultural heritage, music and art were to be used as vehicles of enrichment and development of self concept. The language experience approach was to be used to improve skills in all necessary curriculum areas.

Spanish, the dominant language, was to be used in the program. ESL was to be included during music, physical education, general assemblies -- often with the rest of the school. Teachers of art, culture (Black History and Puerto Rican), physical education, science and library were to work with the P.R.O.B.E. students once a week. thus providing exposure to English in the form of directions and applications.

Two instruments were to be used to determine the child's language development, dominance and general aptitudes. Results of these assessments were to help create prescriptions to give special help for individual children.

The two instruments to be used in the assessment were: the Boehm Test of Concepts, and the James Language Dominance Test.

The principal in each school was to oversee the program and its administrative functions.

The bilingual coordinators (one in each school) were to work with teachers and paraprofessionals. Joint training sessions were to be held at both schools so that the staff would receive the maximum benefit of these in-service sessions. Each school coordinator was to conduct workshops for participating parents twice a month in their own school. Once every two months workshops also were to include other parents in the school.

Parents of children, "volunteer parent cooperators", were to work in the classroom assisting in the learning centers on a weekly rotating basis under the direction of the teacher. This aspect of parental involvement was mandatory for participation in the project.

An educational assistant (one for four (4) year olds and one for five (5) year olds) was to work with children individually in small groups.

A family assistant was to help the coordinator as well as assist parents with problems and in contacting agencies.

Parents were to attend workshops conducted by the coordinator and/or consultants twice a month. They were to review classroom experiences, learn about behavioral objectives at age levels from 3-7 and were to receive a comprehensive view of all the curriculum areas.

Emphasis was to be placed upon the creation of materials that could be used at home to help their children's growth and development.

The complete staff was to be involved in a training program consisting of early childhood philosophy, child development, pre-reading skills, culture and other curriculum areas.

II. DESCRIPTION OF OBSERVED PROGRAM

a. Instructional Facilities

The program took place at two sites. All classrooms had separate self-contained bathrooms for the children in each classroom. Sinks, counter space, open closets for children as well as adequate closed and open storage space for instructional materials were built into each classroom. Most instruction in the program took place within the classrooms assigned to the P.R.O.B.E. project.

At one site there was a connecting passageway allowing entry from one classroom to another without having to leave the classroom. Free interaction between the teachers and paraprofessionals of both classrooms and easy visiting among classes by the children was possible.

In one school the classrooms were of a standard size. Rooms were well set up to take advantage of all space available. Free movement was possible from one learning or activity area to another. Materials were attractively and invitingly displayed and were periodically rotated.

Easy access to and from a school yard also promoted the sense of intimacy with a private entrance and outdoor play area with safe running, climbing and playing space a few paces from the classroom.

At another site the classrooms were even larger, with perhaps twice as much space devoted to the different areas. Carpeting was used throughout this site in the entire classroom area, encouraging the children to use the floors as well as the furniture.

b. Staff

The P.R.O.B.E. project at each site was staffed by a resource teacher, two paraprofessionals and one family assistant. In addition, two tax-levy teachers were assigned to and participated in the program. All staff assigned to the program were bilingual.

The Resource Teachers at both sites were persons experienced in bilingual education; were responsible for the administrative coordination of the project; provided for training of staff and parent volunteer cooperators in techniques, methods and materials and philosophy of instruction; articulated with the Diagnostic Center teachers and appropriate agencies regarding special placements; conferred with consultants, administrators, teachers, and parents to review findings and recommendations; encouraged communication between project staff and school staff and within project staff itself; provided for sessions for the analysis of methodology, teacher training, pupil evaluation and coordination of project activities and school activities at both sites;

maintained a file of records related to pupils and program activities; reviewed, recommended and ordered materials; and periodically visited classrooms to observe implementation of the project.

The Paraprofessionals assisted children in small groups (3-4) and/or individually in learning centers; employed reinforcement techniques in diagnosed areas of difficulty with children; collated and prepared original teacher-made materials necessary for individualized instruction and learning centers; assisted teachers with testing, as well as the construction, care and distribution of materials; assisted with the necessary record keeping, and maintained an inventory of materials and equipment. They also reinforced learning in all areas; assisted in trips, spoken language, story telling, etc.; transcribed children's stories onto paper; held informal conversations and discussions with small groups and/or individually, and observed children's behavior and conferred with teachers for prescriptions for improvement; maintained amicable and supportive informal relationships with all parent volunteer cooperators.

The Family Assistants acted as liaison with parent cooperators and other parents to maintain their involvement in the program; assisted parents with younger children (toddler service) during workshops or during parents' participation in the classroom, and assisted parents with referrals and contacts regarding medical and emotional problems of children and/or family. They visited homes, if necessary.

In addition, they kept records of activities (log), assisted in the preparation of parent workshops, and did advance publicity formally and informally for parent workshops.

Teachers were selected by the principals based upon experience, educational background, and licensing, while the paraprofessionals in most cases were selected to complement the teachers.

All staff schedules were available and adequate.

Staff members maintained a close and cooperative atmosphere. They all seemed to work well together and communicate well with each other and with non-program contacts.

c. Program Participants

There were approximately 160 children who participated in the program. One of the criteria for selection included parents' willingness to work in the classroom setting with their children on a regular basis and their willingness to participate in the workshops.

Pupil records and test data were maintained up to date and repeatedly referred to. Pupil schedules were posted. Children's notebooks and folders of current work were maintained and regularly updated as work was sent home with the children.

Parents of children participating in the program were expected to be available for shifts of participation in the classroom as assistants to the teacher and in workshops which were held every two weeks. A significant number of parents were active participants.

d. Orientation and Training

The evaluator did not attend any orientation or training sessions provided for the staff. Staff reported the following information:

Orientation and training covered a variety of topics such as testing, knowledge of child development, concepts of language development, uses of English as a Second Language and Spanish as a Second Language techniques. In general, the paraprofessional staff preferred joint sessions to those where the teachers and paraprofessionals had separate training sessions. Both teachers and paraprofessionals cited the fact that all could benefit from each other's responses and experiences. They referred especially to workshops in which new materials were presented in that all staff would use the same materials with the children eventually. All staff reported that the training sessions helped them to perform their jobs more effectively than they might have without such training.

In addition to the orientation and training sessions for the teachers and paraprofessionals, parent workshops were conducted by the Resource Teacher and the Family Assistant at each school. All parents were included in the same workshops, both those participating in the program for the first time as well as those involved in the program for the second year. The attendance and participation of the parents was enthusiastic and a significant number participated. The themes of the workshops included preparation for the parents to assist in the classrooms, to understand child development,

to detect health problems, to specify curriculum areas as well as information related to holidays and suggestions on how parents may reinforce at home lessons learned in school, to suggest and help implement ideas for projects and activities for children during vacation periods as well as beauty care and arts and crafts projects. Parents were involved in trips and a variety of other extra contacts with the school such as preparing the caps and gowns worn by the kindergarten children at the graduation exercises.

e. Supervision

Supervision of all the staff was done by the principals of the schools who are quite involved with the program. The resource teacher directly supervised the paraprofessionals and family assistant as well as interacting with the teachers to discuss problems and curriculum, etc.

The teachers also supervised the paraprofessionals. Supervision was done in the classrooms as well as in workshops. Problems were discussed both formally and informally with the resource teachers and principals.

The interaction between the staff has been excellent with an open and friendly feeling evident.

f. Materials

The materials in the classroom were quite varied. They were shared by staff of the four and five year old groups. Much of the equipment as well as some puzzles and posters were purchased before the program began and are the property of the school. Some of the equipment such as cabinets, library display units, easels and chairs were present.

Most materials were the same in the four year old and five year old groups although they were used differently with the different age groups.

Materials varied from instructional ones to manipulative types. Other materials included those necessary for stimulating social development and communication, such as costume jewelry, dresses, dolls, dishes, and home like play materials. Hand puppets and woodworking materials were also available.

Some of the instructional materials were wooden letters and numbers, dominoes, posters, cubes, abacus, worksheets, books, workbooks, color wheels and charts, cards etc.

A great variety of manipulatives - developmental learning materials were available such as blocks, tinker toys, logos, attribute sets (instructional as well), crayons, paints and other arts and crafts materials.

Materials were in good shape and attractively displayed. All were appropriate for that age group. Most materials were made available to the children in a planned manner for small group instruction. Others were displayed on open storage shelves and available to children during free play.

Among the materials most frequently used were the puzzles, blocks, beads, wooden erector sets, clay, paints and crayons, workbooks, letters and numbers.

Audio/visual materials were also available including a record player, cassette player, programmed tapes as well as a filmstrip projector with a variety of appropriate filmstrips.

g. Description of Instructional Activities

The classroom program can be said to have been divided into three parts.

I. Class Instruction - work and lessons done with entire class at the same time.

II. Small Group Instruction - usually at free time in different learning areas.

III. Prep Periods - instruction done with prep teachers that either come to P.R.O.B.E. classes or to whose class the P.R.O.B.E. participants go for instruction in music, art, science etc.

The following is what a normal day was like. The teachers' lesson plan rotated around three modes of instruction.

1. Class instruction of the whole group involved such instructional activities as circle time or story time; routines such as attendance and welcoming activities (ie., counting the children present, picking out their names; and talking about their weekend and the weather today); making butter, naming articles of clothing; counting; singing; rhythm and music; talking about a picture; snack; drawing; making collages; rehearsals; playing ball; conversing in English; seeing filmstrips; making trips to the park; playing outdoors.

2. Small group instruction was usually during free time. This was done with groups no larger than four children and in different learning areas in the classrooms.

Teachers, paraprofessionals and parents were all involved in this type of instruction.

Instructional activities in small groups involved: working on puzzles; making collages; describing or playing with different shapes and colors on color wheels or boxes; books, dramatic free play (in home like areas); testing (most testing took place during this time); stringing beads; painting with both water and poster paints; differentiation of textures; ESL (with earphones); planting; writing or drawing in their workbooks; small blocks; tinker toys; logos; wooden erection sets; jumping and tumbling on mat; lacing; modeling clay; pegboard and pegs; attribute sets (shapes and colors); playing with dominoes; counting and learning the different coins in money (a little store was set up on one of the tables); magnets; size concept; wooden numbers and letters; drawing.

All these activities were available during free time, which occupied about 3/4 of the class session.

3. The prep periods, when other teachers came in and taught the children songs, to create drawings or science lessons or ESL instruction, constituted the third part of the day. Often the classes were combined with tax-levy classes during this period.

h. Coordination of Funded Program with Tax-Levy School Program

Excellent coordination existed between the funded program and the tax-levy school program.

At both sites P.R.O.B.E. project children were regularly included together with other classes of the same age group during the teacher's prep periods in areas such as music, library, gym and ESL.

The funded staff and the regular teachers did discuss and share plans, problems, prescriptions, test results and the progress of the children at all times.

Staff had a good working relationship and compared notes constantly. There was very good teamwork between the teachers and paraprofessionals and the resource teacher.

III. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Pupils participating in at least 50% of the scheduled sessions demonstrated a significant increase in cognitive functioning in Spanish for four and five year old children as measured by Boehm Test and James Language Dominance Test.

2. Parents of pupils participating in at least 50% of the scheduled workshop sessions showed significant increase in knowledge of relevant skills for four and five year olds as measured by a program developed observation inventory.

3. Parents participating in workshop program showed a significant increase in knowledge of child development, Spanish language reading and English language reading in the program.

4. Pupils were diagnosed and screened for cognitive difficulties. Referrals were made to appropriate agencies.

5. Teachers and paraprofessionals participating in at least 50% of the scheduled workshops showed a statistically significant increase in implementation of relevant skills for four and five year olds as measured by the behavioral objectives of skills to be accomplished for the children as a result of this program.

6. All teachers and paraprofessionals completed minimal credits in Reading and/or Early Childhood courses towards a higher degree at Lehman College in B/L education during this program.

IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The pre-K and kindergarten pupils were given the James Language Dominance Test as a pre-test in October 1978 and as a post-test in May 1979.

The James Language Dominance Test is designed to assess the language dominance of kindergarten Hispanic children. It consists of 40 visual items designed to yield a measure of the child's language dominance or bilingualism in both production and comprehension. Test results are used to classify children as Spanish dominant, bilingual with Spanish as the home language, bilingual with both English and Spanish at home, English dominant but bilingual in comprehension and English dominant in both comprehension and production.

Tables 1 and 2 (a by school and language dominance analysis) and Tables 3 and 4 (a by grade and language dominance analysis) contains information about the number of students who were pre-tested in October 1978, their mean and standard deviation for the pre-test, post-test and gain between pre and post test, and t-test value for the mean gain.

In most cases the students fitted into Category 2, entitled Bilingual with Spanish as the home language at the beginning of the program. However, students at the end of the program had shifted to Category 3, Bilingual with Spanish and English as a

TABLE 1

Comparison of Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Pupils Participating in the P.R.O.B.E. Program by Grade Level

(Name of Test: James Language Dominance Test - raw score) Spanish Testing

	Grade	N	Pre-test X	Pre-test SD	Post-test X	Post-test SD	t-test
School A	K	40	26.5	12.4	28.6	14.2	2.70**
	Pre-K	28	27.3	11.4	29.8	11.8	3.09**
School B	K	29	26.0	6.80	29.1	7.81	2.63**
	Pre-K	39	31.4	4.83	33.4	3.18	3.23**

** significant at .01 level.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Pupils Participating in the P.R.O.B.E. Program by Grade Level

(Name of Test: James Language Dominance Test - raw score)
Spanish Testing

Grade	N	Pre-test X	Pre-test SD	Post-test X	Post-test SD	t-test
K	69	26.3	10.4	28.8	11.9	7.84**
Pre-K	67	29.7	8.4	31.9	8.2	8.94**

** significant at .01 level.

TABLE 3

Comparison of Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Pupils Participating in the P.R.O.B.E. Program by Grade Level

(Name of Test: James Language Dominance Test - raw score) !English Testing

	Grade	N	Pre-test X	Pre-test SD	Post-test X	Post-test SD	t-test
School A	K	40	27.3	11.5	31.1	11.1	2.61**
	Pre-K	28	15.6	11.4	22.3	10.1	3.71**
School B	K	29	11.8	10.70	19.4	12.6	3.18**
	Pre-K	39	18.0	10.1	23.1	10.0	3.32**

** significant at ,01 level.

TABLE 4

Comparison of Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Pupils Participating in the P.R.O.B.E. Program by Grade Level

(Name of Test: James Language Dominance Test - raw score)
English Testing

Grade	N	Pre-test X	Pre-test SD	Post-test X	Post-test SD	t-test
K	69	20.8	13.7	26.2	13.3	8.65**
Pre-K	67	17.0	10.6	22.8	10.0	10.25**

** significant at .01 level.

Home Language.

The gains between pre and post test scores were positive. Students after participating in the program had a higher degree of mastery in both languages than when the program started.

The mean gains were significant at the .01 level as shown by the t-test values. The differences between pre and post test scores were large enough to be beyond changes expected by chance alone. There was a real improvement in the abilities measured by the test and it could not be explained by chance factors. The program's impact on student achievement was beneficial.

The Boehm Test of Basic Concepts was administered as a pre-test in October 1978 to all participating pre-K and Kindergarten students. It was administered as a post-test in May 1979. The Boehm Test was administered in Spanish. The Boehm Test of Basic Concepts (BTBC) is designed to measure students' mastery of concepts necessary for achievement in the first years of school. The test is read aloud by the teacher and is appropriate for use with students in the lower grades. BTBC results may be used both to identify students with deficiencies in this area, and to identify individual concepts on which the students could profit from instruction. The test includes concepts about space, quantity and numbers, time and miscellaneous. The total number of test items is 50. The raw score, which is the number of items correctly answered, was used in the analysis of data.

Tables 5 and 6 contains information about the number of students who were pre-tested in October 1978, their mean and standard deviation for the pre-test, post-test and gain between pre and post test, and the t-test value for the mean gain.

TABLE 5

Comparison of Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Pupils Participating in the P.R.O.B.E. Program by Grade Level

(Name of Test: Boehm Test of Basic Concepts in Spanish Language)

	Grade	N	Pre-test X	Pre-test SD	Post-test X	Post-test SD	t-test
School A	K	40	26.7	9.0	36.8	8.4	4.88**
	Pre-K	28	17.7	6.7	28.3	8.7	4.34**
School B	K	39	16.9	5.6	38.7	10.0	4.93**
	Pre-K	39	26.6	5.5	39.9	6.4	5.92**

** significant at .01 level.

TABLE 6

Comparison of Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Pupils Participating in the P.R.O.B.E. Program by Grade Level

(Name of Test: Boehm Test of Basic Concepts in Spanish)

Grade	N	Pre-test X	Pre-test SD	Post-test X	Post-test SD	t-test
K	69	22.6	9.2	37.6	9.1	14.54 **
Pre-K	67	22.9	7.5	35.0	9.1	14.57**

** significant at .01 level.

In general, students were able to answer correctly approximately 46 percent of the items on the test at the beginning of the program. At the end of the program, the pre-K students were able to answer correctly approximately 72 percent of the test items, while the kindergarten group were able to answer correctly approximately 76 percent of the test items.

The column labeled Difference Scores indicated the difference between the pre and post test scores. The following conclusions were drawn from an analysis of this column and the post-test column:

The gain between pre and post test was positive. Students had a higher degree of mastery of basic concepts than when the program started.

The mean gain was significant at the .01 level as shown by the t-test value. The difference between pre and post test scores was large enough to be beyond changes expected by chance alone. The improvement of 13 points for the pre-k group and 15 points for the kindergarten group during the program was a real improvement in the abilities measured by the test and could not be explained by chance variations. The program's impact on student achievement in basic concepts was beneficial.

In terms of the other objectives, parents who participated in the workshop program did make significant increases in their knowledge of relevant skills for 4 and 5 year old children as well as in areas of child development, Spanish language, reading readiness and reading.

In cases where students were diagnosed and screened for possible cognitive difficulties, referrals were made to appropriate agencies.

It is evident from the statistical analysis of student test data, that Project P.R.O.B.E. has been successful in achieving its stated objectives.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

a. It is recommended that evaluation observations be made from the beginning of the school year and be scheduled throughout the year.

b. It is recommended that arrangements be made for continuation of ESL instruction for the English dominant five year olds at P.S. 5 who will graduate from the P.R.O B.E. program.

c. It is recommended that arrangements in scheduling allow for greater interaction between the four year old and five year old groups at each site through combined group activities in which the groups are formed from both classes. This would more effectively implement the non-graded thrust of the program.

d. It is recommended that personnel available to the program resource teachers, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, family assistants and volunteer parent cooperators be utilized by both four and five year old groups to cover classes in the event of absences in the staff.

e. It is recommended that less time be spent in ritualized routines and more time be spent in informal instruction responding to children's interests as they develop and are expressed.

f. It is recommended that, weather permitting, outdoor

play time be allocated at both sites as part of the daily routine.

g. It is recommended that some separate workshops for parents new to the program be considered in order to meet the different needs of those parents and to prevent repetition of information that parents experienced in the program do not need.

h. It is recommended that there be more visiting by the staff among the two sites in which the program exists.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The P.R.O.B.E. program successfully created a very stimulating learning environment for four and five year olds according to the proposed program design. Focus was on improving the reading growth and cognitive development through bilingual instruction. A great richness of techniques and materials were used to provide a language experience approach for the thirty (30) four year olds and the fifty (50) five year olds and their parents who participated at each site. Enrollment in classes was limited to fifteen (15) for four year olds and twenty-five (25) five year olds. In seven of eight classes, Spanish was dominant and in one English was the dominant language of instruction. ESL instruction was offered to the Spanish dominant classes and SSL was offered to the English dominant class. Coverage during P.R.O.B.E. program teacher's prep periods by tax-levy teachers of art, culture, physical education, science and library provided the children with additional exposure to English as interaction with other children in the school.

A unique feature of this program - the participation of volunteer parent cooperators who assisted in the classrooms on a weekly rotating basis and participated in twice a month workshops - provided additional reinforcement for the children at home and helped many of the parents themselves to strengthen their reading and speaking skills in both English and Spanish, deepened their understanding of child development, knowledge of school tasks, strengthened their self images and increased their general sense of identification with school as a sympathetic and positive force in their children's lives.

Very good working relationships were established between the teachers, paraprofessionals, family assistants and resource teachers, which in turn, established good informal relationships with parents. The program was strongly supported by the principals of the two participating schools.

Children learned to recognize and/or write their names and know numbers and colors and shapes in Spanish and English as well as to communicate and have respect for themselves, their fellow students, teachers and parents.

The program met its objectives and should be continued.